

7 Secrets of Effective Intercession

We all have family members, friends, or workmates who need our prayers. Here are some practical tips to make intercessory prayer more effective:

1. Draw close to God. The Bible promises if we draw close to God, He will draw close to us (James 4:8). Too often we forget to begin a time of intercession by coming into the presence of God so that He can direct our prayers. Begin your intercession by focusing on the Lord Himself—love Him, praise Him, worship Him.

2. Cleanse your heart. As we come into the presence of God on behalf of another, we long for God to open the floodgates of His heart to bless, heal, and pour out His love on that person. But for God's love to flow through you unimpeded, your own heart needs to be free from sin. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Confess your sins and accept the Lord's cleansing and forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

3. Pray Scripture. One of the most powerful ways to intercede is to use the words of Scripture. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you a Bible verse or passage that might apply to the situation you are praying about. Personalize the words and turn them into a prayer. For example, "[Jane] can do all things through Him who strengthens [her]" (Phil. 4:13).

4. Inquire of the Lord. Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, always interceding (Rom. 8:34). He calls you to prayer; He gives you the burden for your loved one or friend. Ask Him how *He* is praying for the situation or individual. Be still and listen. You will be surprised by what new insights are revealed.

5. Prayer and fasting. When you have a challenging prayer

assignment, try fasting while you pray. “Fasting can bring breakthroughs in the spiritual realm that could never be had in any other way,” writes Richard Foster. Why does fasting add power to prayer? Because fasting—abstaining from eating for a time—denies self. It is an act of humility, which opens your heart more fully to the Holy Spirit to let Him pray through you.

6. Partner with others in prayer. Prayer partnership is based on the power of agreement. “If two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for,” said Jesus, “it will be done for them by my Father in heaven” (Matt. 18:19). Partnership is particularly effective when praying for a long-term request or complex problem. When one intercessor grows weary, the other can offer encouragement. One may receive a spiritual insight that the other can confirm. And when your request is answered, how exciting it is to praise God together!

7. Enter into God’s rest. This is probably the best-kept secret of effective intercession. Intercessors who have depth and breadth and weight to their prayers know how to rest in God’s presence. They know how to tap into that quiet, restful reservoir of God’s strength. “In quietness and trust is your strength” (Isa. 30:15). Learn to cease from striving as you pray, relying less and less on yourself and more and more on God.

And here’s a little suggestion: instead of praying for a long list of petitions every day, pray for specific requests on certain days of the week. For example, pray for family members on Monday, your church on Tuesday, missionaries on Thursday, etc. Be sure to reserve Wednesday just for praise, *no petitions*. Nothing overcomes a mid-week slump like a surge of worship and praise.

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